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Indonesia's right of reply to the statement of the European Community on human rights questions at the UN General Assembly Third Committee - 19 November 1991

(from notes taken by Andrew and Meg - not verbatim)

On 12 November at 7.30 am, after a service in the Motael church in Dili, a group of people took to the street in the direction of the cemetery. Some people separated off from the main group and went towards the Governor's office. The security forces and the police tried to persuade them to disperse. Instead, they became violent, and attacked the police and tried to seize the arms of the police. One policeman was wounded. The situation developed into a riot. Some foreign tourists had joined the procession to the cemetery however they were not in the party which had split off and so could not have properly seen anything, so this explains the discrepancy in the different versions of what happened. The police were compelled to use force to quell the riot. [He went on to cite all the different kinds of weapons the [illegible] confiscated, including different kinds of guns (assault rifles I think), hand grenades and ammunition.]

The military commander in Dili assured the ICRC that people [detained at the scene?] would be free to go home, and the ICRC accompanied them back to their homes as they reported in their own press release of [date]. Daily life in Dili remains as normal.

On 17 November it was announced in Jakarta that a national investigative commission will be set up, headed by a Supreme Court judge. Also participating in the commission will be the Ministries of Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Armed Forces, Parliament and the Supreme Aviaory Council. Whoever is found to be responsible will be tried.

It must also be noted that the incident occurred after the Portuguese unilaterally suspended the visit of the parliamentarians to East Timor. There are tendencies of some groups to exaggerate things in order to discredit the Indonesian government. But despite this the government expresses its genuine regret for the incident and the loss of life.